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Personality and Job Burnout: Can Coping Skills Reduce Job Burnout

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13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words)

A before and after study design was employed to examine the effects of personality and coping training on job burnout. One hundred and one students completed the project. There were no significant differences between before/after measures of job burnout, thus, coping training did not reduce burnout. The failure of stress coping training to have an effect may be due to one or more of the following: (a) poor design of the stress-coping instruction procedure, (b) part time employed students generally do not experience high levels of stress, and (c), stress coping training has no effect on how people habitually respond to stress. Additional research is needed to explore these possibilities. The personality measure, core self-evaluation (CSE), indicated a positive predisposition toward burnout and significantly predicted two of the three burnout measures: lower CSE students showed lower professional efficacy and higher cynicism. Results demonstrate that measurable personality attributes are associated with the tendency for people to experience job burnout. This suggests that in order to minimize the likelihood of burnout, a personality assessment procedure should be employed with individuals in stressful positions. Further research with individuals facing job stress is needed to design potentially more effective stress coping training.

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## FINAL TECHNICAL REPORT

GRANT #: N00014-01-1-0917

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INSTITUTION: Kansas State University

GRANT TITLE: Personality and Job Burnout: Can Coping Skills Reduce Job Burnout

AWARD PERIOD: 1 May 2001 - 30 September 2002

OBJECTIVE: To investigate the extent to which measurable personality traits can predict the susceptibility of individuals to job burnout, and to determine whether or not training in stress coping can reduce susceptibility to job burnout.

APPROACH: The project involved a before and after panel study design in which participating students with part-time jobs initially completed a battery of personality and stress coping questionnaires diagnostic of susceptibility to job burnout. After receiving stress coping training, their job adjustment was tracked for the next 3 months, and measures of burnout were obtained. Analyses focused on the extent to which the initial personality assessments predicted burnout and coping training may reduce it.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: 101 of the 300 students who participated in the initial assessment phase of the study completed all subsequent phases. Analyses comparing the demographic and personality attributes of those who completed the study and those who failed to complete it revealed no significant differences between them. Among those completing the study, there were no significant differences between the before and after measures of the three components of job burnout (emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and diminished professional efficacy). Thus, stress coping training did not reduce burnout. The personality measures of neuroticism, self-esteem, locus of control, and self-efficacy grouped together to form the core self-evaluation trait (CSE) indicating a high or low predisposition toward burnout, significantly predicted two of the three burnout measures: low CSE students showed lower professional efficacy and higher cynicism than high CSE students. In all of the foregoing analyses, there were no significant differences found between the 35 males and 66 females who completed the study.

CONCLUSIONS: Measurable personality attributes can be integrated under the heading of core self-evaluation to reliably predict major components of burnout. The failure to find that stress coping training was associated with a significant reduction in any of the three components of burnout may be due to one or more of the following: (a) poor design of the stress-coping instruction procedure, (b) part time employed students generally do not experience levels of stress high enough to require substantial coping efforts, and (c),

stress coping training has no effect on how people habitually respond to stress. Additional research is needed to explore these possibilities.

SIGNIFICANCE: Results show that measurable personality attributes are associated with the tendency for people to experience job burnout. Pending further research with larger samples of people in stressful jobs, this finding suggests that in order to minimize the likelihood of burnout, a personality assessment procedure should be employed when selecting individuals for stressful positions. Further research with individuals facing substantial levels of job stress is needed to determine whether it is possible to design effective stress coping instruction procedures.

PATENT INFORMATION: No patents have been applied for.

AWARD INFORMATION: Christopher Loersch, undergraduate research assistant, graduated from KSU magna cum laude, and was awarded a Fellowship for graduate study in Psychology at Ohio State University.

REFEREED PUBLICATIONS (for total award period): none

BOOK CHAPTERS, SUBMISSIONS, ABSTRACTS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS  
(for total award period):

1. Downey, R. G., Rappoport, L., McCabe, A. E., Tagler, M. J., & Hemenover, S. H., (2002, June) Can coping skills reduce job burnout. Paper presented at Mississippi Consortium for Military Personnel Research, Memphis, TN.
2. Downey, R. G., (2002, Feb.). Precursors of job burnout: Situational versus personal factors. Invited address, University of Central Florida, Orlando, FL.
3. Gaylord, T., Gill, D., & Downey, R. G., (2002, April). The role of coping within the theoretical framework of burnout. Paper presented at the Seventeenth Annual Conference of the Society for Industrial Organizational Psychology, Toronto, Canada.
4. Tagler, M. J., McCabe, A. E., Downey, R. G., Hemenover, S. H., & Rappoport, L. (2002, May). Core self-evaluations predict job burnout. Paper presentation to the Mid-Western Psychological Association Conference, Chicago, IL.
5. Theis, B. (2002, April). Job type and job burnout: Are they related? Kansas State University Department of Psychology Undergraduate Research Convocation, Manhattan, KS.
6. McCabe, A. E., Tagler, M. J., Rappoport, L., Hemenover, S. H., & Downey, R.G. (2003, March). Personality predictors of job burnout. Paper accepted for presentation at the APA/NIOSH Conference on Work, Stress and Health, Toronto, Canada.

7. Tagler, M. J., McCabe, A. E., Hemenover, S. H., Downey, R. G., Rappoport, L., & Theis, B. (2003, February). Emotion mediates the personality and job burnout relationship. Paper accepted for presentation at the annual meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Los Angeles, CA.